

***I applied for the 2008 Diversity Visa lottery at a business in my town where they said I was guaranteed to win. Your website says that there are no guarantees. What is going on?***

Thank you for contacting me. There are no guarantees with the Diversity Visa lottery—which is why it is a lottery. Anyone interested in registering for the 2008 Diversity Visa lottery may do so free of charge until noon (US Eastern Time) on Sunday, December 3, when the registration period will close. Please do not wait to submit your application, as the website gets very busy toward the end of the registration period, and there are no exceptions for late entries, even if the website is too busy for the entry to go through in time.

The Diversity Visa lottery is managed at the Kentucky Consular Center in the United States. After the registration period closes on December 3, the computer system will randomly select winning numbers from the applicants who have applied, and forward those cases in a randomly assigned order to US Embassies and Consulates overseas. Each country that is eligible to participate in the lottery (which includes Georgia) is assigned a certain number of visas per year. We start interviewing applicants with winning numbers in October in the order that we receive the visa cases from the Kentucky Consular Center. We issue visas to qualified applicants until all the visa numbers assigned to Georgia are gone. Please contact me at [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov) if you have additional questions about the Diversity Visa lottery and I will be happy to answer your questions.

***I want to travel early in mid-January to see my relatives in New York for a few weeks. When is the best time to apply for a visa?***

With few exceptions, all applicants who qualify for a non-immigrant visa will receive a visa that is valid for one year with multiple entries. We urge you not to wait to apply for your visa. The holiday season is a very busy time, and as we get closer to the holiday season, it will become more difficult to quickly schedule appointments for visa interviews. At this time, the wait for an appointment is 2 to 3 business days. Therefore, you should apply as soon as possible to prevent and delays in your travel plans. To schedule an appointment, you may visit any branch of TBC bank to pay the \$100 non-refundable application fee. At that time, you will be given instructions on how to schedule a visa appointment on the telephone.

***I have heard that it is possible to have my passport and visa sent back to me with a courier. It is difficult for me to take time away from my job—I have to do so for the interview, and will need to do so again to pick up my visa. Is there a way to have the passport and visa delivered to my office?***

Yes. Beginning October 23, we have begun shipping passports with visas back to their owners with DHL. The delivery service, which is optional at this time (tourist visa applicants may still collect the passports themselves if they wish), costs 8 lari, which you

can pay to DHL when the passport and visa are delivered to you. The fee is the same regardless of how many passports are sent together; therefore families and large groups traveling together may have their passports delivered in the same envelope. Applicants who select the delivery option will generally receive their visas faster than the people who come back to pick them up the next day. You may specify the address to which you would like your passport delivered.

***I applied for a tourist visa last week, but my application was refused. When can I reapply?***

Applicants who fail to qualify for a tourist visa are welcome to reapply whenever they choose; however, we do not recommend reapplication unless you have substantial new information to present that you did not present at the time of your first interview. Please keep in mind that applicants will be charged a \$100 non-refundable fee every time they apply for a visa, regardless of whether that visa application is approved.

If your visa has been refused, you may want to sit down and evaluate realistically your ties to Georgia. You may want to write down on paper what qualifying ties you think you have that were not evaluated at the time of your interview with the consular officer. You may want to consider whether you explained your situation accurately, if the consular officer overlooked something, or if there is additional information you could present that would help establish your residence and strong ties to that residence.

***I have traveled to the US before. Should I bring my old passport to the visa interview?***

Yes. You may need to show the old passport to the officer to confirm the length of your stay or for other reasons dependent on the specifics of your case. We always ask for the old passport and bringing it with you can prevent delays in processing your new visa case.

***This is more of a specific inquiry, but I have a friend who has a similar situation and maybe you hear from other people like me as well. My daughter, who is a U.S. Citizen, emigrated to the US several years ago, married, and has three children. I would like to spend the holidays with her family, and then stay for a longer period of time. I have not seen them since their last trip to Georgia four years ago and the flight to the US is difficult for me, as I am not in the best health, so I don't plan to return to Georgia right away. I have heard that it can be difficult to qualify for a tourist visa. Should I apply for a tourist visa or an immigrant visa?***

Thank you for your inquiry; you are correct, we do receive many inquiries like yours. The type of visa you apply for in this situation should really be based upon your intent. Do you intend to immigrate to the U.S.? If so, then you should probably apply for an immigrant visa. If you intend a short stay in the US, then you should probably apply for

a non-immigrant visa. To receive a non-immigrant visa, you must convince a consular officer that your family and financial ties to Georgia are so strong that you would have to return to your residence after your visit to the US. Visa recipients are told by the immigration inspectors at the port of entry how long they may stay in the US, usually for a maximum of six months.

Sometimes relatives of US Citizens do choose to apply for immigrant visas in situations where they plan to spend large amounts of time in the United States every year, stay for longer than six months of the year, or because they want to avoid having to apply for a tourist visa every year when they are spending the bulk of their time in the US anyway. The immigrant visa process begins with your relative in the United States filing a petition with the US Department of Homeland Security (usually the I-130 petition) for you to join them in the United States. US citizens visiting Georgia may also file this petition for parents, spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21 only during American Citizens Services hours at the consular section of the US Embassy in Tbilisi (every business day from 2 to 5 pm).

After traveling to the United States on the immigrant visa, immigrant visa recipients become legal permanent residents (LPRs, or green card holders) of the U.S. Remaining outside the U.S. for longer than 365 consecutive days may result in a loss of legal permanent resident status. Many immigrants to the U.S. decide to return abroad to reside. If you are a legal permanent resident and have remained abroad for more than one year without a re-entry permit from the US Department of Homeland Security, it is possible that your LPR status has lapsed. If you wish to return to the U.S. as an immigrant, there are certain procedures which must be followed to allow your return, should you meet all the requirements for returning residents.

A permanent resident who intends to remain abroad for more than a year should file Form I-131, Application for Travel Document for a Reentry Permit with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) *before* leaving the United States. This permit is valid for two years and may not be extended. If this permit is obtained, the alien may use it to reenter the United States within the period of validity. Every alien applying for readmission must satisfy the immigration authorities that he or she is eligible in all respects for admission. If you are a legal permanent resident in Georgia who has been outside the United States for more than one year, you should contact our office to find out what which forms you need to file to reinstate your status. You may need to have your sponsoring relative file a new immigrant visa petition for you if immigration officials determine that you have lost your status.

***Is it reasonable to buy a plane ticket before my visa interview?***

We never advise anyone to purchase tickets before the visa interview. Unexpected delays and processing requirements—which sometimes can happen after the visa application is approved by the consular officer—may delay the issuance of your visa; travel is expensive and, as you are responsible for any costs associated with changing travel plans or tickets, we wish to help prevent any unnecessary expenses for you. Therefore, we recommend that you wait until you have received your visa before you purchase your tickets.

***What is a multiple visa fee?***

Visa reciprocity is based on agreements between different governments on fees charged to other countries' citizens for visas. In the past, a visa fee was charged by the Georgian government to U.S. Citizens traveling to Georgia—and by the reciprocity agreement, Georgian visa recipients were charged the same fee for visas to the U.S. At this time, visa reciprocity fees between the U.S. and Georgia have been eliminated. Therefore, there is no longer an additional reciprocity fee for Georgian citizens wishing to travel to the United States. The non-refundable \$100 application fee is the only fee charged by the Embassy for a tourist visa application.

***My child was born in the United States. How can I have the U.S. birth certificate authenticated?***

Consular officers at US Embassies overseas can only authenticate governmental signatures documents that were issued in the country where that Embassy is located, when these foreign documents are intended for use in the United States. Therefore, if you need an authentication on a document issued in the United States for use in Georgia, you will need to have the authentication done in the U.S.. Consular officers are not permitted to authenticate the seals and signature of notaries or US federal or state government officials, with the exception of the Secretary of State. For a state-by state listing of authentication offices in the US, please visit the following website:  
[http://travel.state.gov/law/info/judicial/judicial\\_701.html](http://travel.state.gov/law/info/judicial/judicial_701.html)  
Most states (and the US Department of State in Washington) can authenticate documents by mail. There are usually fees associated with these services, and they are also listed on the website given above.